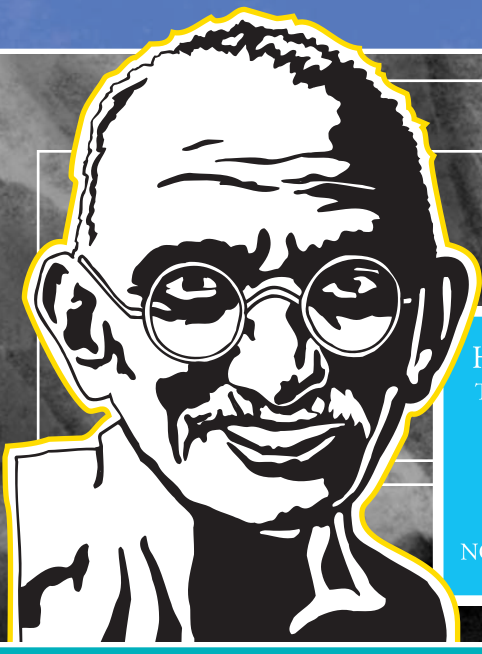
20th CENTURY BIOGRAPHIES

MAHATMA GANDHI



HE SHOWED THE WORLD HOW TO BRING CHANGE THROUGH NONVIOLENCE

BY ANNE SCHRAFF

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CHAPTER 1

Mahatma Gandhi led the struggle for Indian independence from the British Empire. The British ruled India for many years. Gandhi also gained civil rights for the Indian population that lived in South Africa.

Although Gandhi was a small, frail man, he faced strong nations using only his weapons of nonviolent **resistance**. Encouraging all people to be kind, honest, and peaceful, Gandhi refused to return injury with injury.

Gandhi had no wealth and no political position. He fought injustice with prayer, **fasting**, and peaceful protest.

When Gandhi died, a young African American college student far away in the American South read about Gandhi's methods of bringing peaceful change. His name was Martin Luther King Jr. When King led his own struggle for the equality of black America, he walked in Gandhi's footsteps.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869. He was born in the small town of Porbandar on the western coast of India. Mohandas was born in a large room in the family's three-story stone house. Mohandas and his family lived in the big house. Several uncles and their families lived there too. Mohandas and his family had just two rooms for themselves.

Mohandas' father, Karamchand Gandhi, was a government official in town. He had been married three times, and each of his wives died. When he was forty, he married a fourth wife. She was thirteen-year-old Putlibai, Mohandas' mother. It was very common for older Indian men to marry very young brides. When Mohandas was born, his mother was twenty-two and his father was fifty.

The Gandhi family was comfortable by Indian standards. The home had many books, mostly about religion. The Gandhi family was Hindu, as were most Indians. The Hindu religion is very complicated. It **embraces** a belief in many gods and strict moral values.

Mohandas was a strange looking little boy. He had a long, skinny neck, and ears that stuck out. He had wild, thick black hair. His best features were a happy smile, and bright, **twinkling**

eyes. Mohandas liked to play with rubber balloons and revolving tops. He was small for his age and easily scared. He was afraid of snakes, thieves, ghosts, and the dark. He disliked all sports.

At the time Mohandas was born, India was ruled by Great Britain. The culture was dominated by the **caste** system. Everything that happened to a person in life depended on what caste they belonged to. Your caste decided what job you could get and who you could marry. There were four major castes. At the very bottom, there was a group of people called the "untouchables." They were given the dirtiest jobs. They could not walk on the public streets, or even touch other people.

The top caste was the Brahmans, who were **scholars**. Then, there were the warriors. After that came the traders, and finally the peasants. The Gandhi

family belonged to the trader class. The name Gandhi means "grocer." These people could also work for the government, as Mohandas' father did.

When Mohandas was seven, his father was promoted to a job in Rajkot, 120 miles from Porbandar. Mohandas started primary school there. He had problems with arithmetic. Mohandas made no friends in school, preferring to play alone. When Mohandas went to high school, he disliked it even more than he had disliked primary school.

Mohandas' mother, Putlibai, was very religious. She never ate a meal without praying first. She went to the Hindu temple every day. Putlibai had a strong, quiet personality. Mohandas loved her dearly. She was loving and tender toward her children. Like most Indian women, she wore heavy silver anklets

and gold bracelets. She also wore a nice nose ring for special occasions.

Mohandas' father was a serious, hard-working man. Mohandas feared making him angry. Although it is against Hindu custom to smoke cigarettes, Mohandas sneaked some cigarettes one day. Then he stole money to get more cigarettes.

He felt so guilty about what he had done that he decided he should kill himself. He collected seeds from a **datura** plant and ate them. Then he lay down to die. The seeds, however, only made him sleepy.

Sometimes Mohandas went with his mother to the Hindu temple. The inside of the temple was very dark. The paintings on the walls were dramatic and frightening. But Mohandas loved his mother so much he would do anything she asked of him.



When Mohandas was thirteen, he began to ask questions about things that bothered him. He could not understand why the untouchables were treated so badly just because they were born in a lower social position.

At this time in India, there was no indoor plumbing. (This was the case in many places throughout the world.) People used **chamber pots** in their rooms, and somebody had to empty them. This was a job only the

untouchables could do. Mohandas watched the untouchables doing this. He thought it was not fair. Why should these people have the worst jobs and the least pay? Mohandas believed that the untouchables were just as good as he was.

Child marriage was customary in India. So, when Mohandas turned thirteen, his father decided he should get married. Mohandas was still in high school. After his marriage, he would continue to live at home, but his wife would be with him.

Mohandas and other boys his age did not make friends with girls and choose someone they liked. The marriages were arranged by the parents. So Mohandas was told he would be marrying Kasturba Nakanji. She was the daughter of a Porbandar merchant. Like Mohandas, Kasturba was thirteen.

Mohandas was excited about the wedding and the big feast that would follow. Mohandas was dressed up like a prince. He rode a beautiful horse to Kasturba's house to pick her up for the **ceremony**. Then the two young people stood on a platform looking like pretty dolls. The Hindu priests prayed and sang hymns. The couple exchanged sweet cakes. They were now man and wife. Mohandas took Kasturba home to his parents' house.

Kasturba was still a young girl. She wanted to go out to play with her friends, but Mohandas was very **stern**. He told her she needed his permission to go out at all. He was still in school and lived with his parents. But Mohandas understood what it was to be a Hindu husband. He was the ruler of the household.

Kasturba was tiny and delicate and very lovely. Mohandas was jealous of her. When she disobeyed him in even a small way, he grew very angry. Now that Mohandas was married, his grades slipped in high school. He was too busy watching over his wife to study.

At age fifteen, Mohandas became friends with a Muslim boy who was three years older than him. Sheikh Mehtab had all the qualities Mohandas admired. Mehtab was **charming** and brave. He was a fine athlete. Mehtab enjoyed the fact that Mohandas looked up to him. He taught the younger boy his own ideas.

Hindus, including Mohandas and his family, were vegetarians. They did not believe in eating meat. But Mehtab, a Muslim, believed that eating the flesh of animals made a person strong and healthy.

Mehtab finally convinced Mohandas to eat meat. They shared a meal of roasted goat. Mohandas felt very guilty about acting against his religion. He threw up the meal right away.

That night Mohandas had a horrible nightmare. He dreamt a live goat was trapped inside his stomach, and it was crying. But, even after this bad experience, Mohandas continued to eat meat with Mehtab. Mohandas got used to it and stopped feeling guilty.

Karamchand Gandhi, Mohandas' father, became very ill when his son was sixteen. After school every day, Mohandas went to his father's bedside. But, Mohandas wanted to go to his wife instead. He felt the duty to be with his father, but his heart was with Kasturba. At the time, Kasturba was expecting the couple's first child.

One day, Mohandas found his father sleeping, and he hurried off to his wife for a short time. While Mohandas was gone, his father grew sicker and died. It was a terrible **shock** for Mohandas. He was very sorrowful that his father died without his son at his bedside. Mohandas was torn with guilt that he had failed his father. A few weeks later, Kasturba gave birth to their child, but it was very weak.

The baby lived only three days. Mohandas blamed himself for the baby's death. He believed he was suffering this misfortune because he had abandoned his father in his time of sickness.



CHAPTER 3

The death of Karamchand Gandhi was a major blow to the family. It left them without financial support. The eldest son, Laxmidas, was twenty-two years old, and he had no job. Mohandas had two more years of high school to finish. The family had to struggle to keep Mohandas in school. They had to rely on the help of uncles.

In January 1888 Mohandas was eighteen. He had finished high school

and enrolled in college. He failed college after five months. Kasturba gave birth to their first healthy child, Harilal. Mohandas could not support his wife and son. He decided to find a profession that would bring in good money. He chose law.

Mohandas Gandhi was told that he could become a lawyer if he went to Great Britain and studied for three years. This was less time than it would have taken him to become a lawyer in India. But the cost of this education in Great Britain was thirteen thousand rupees. That was a huge amount for a boy from a poor family. There were no scholarships.

Putlibai, Gandhi's mother, did not want her son to go to Britain. She worried that he would make friends with the wrong people and lose his

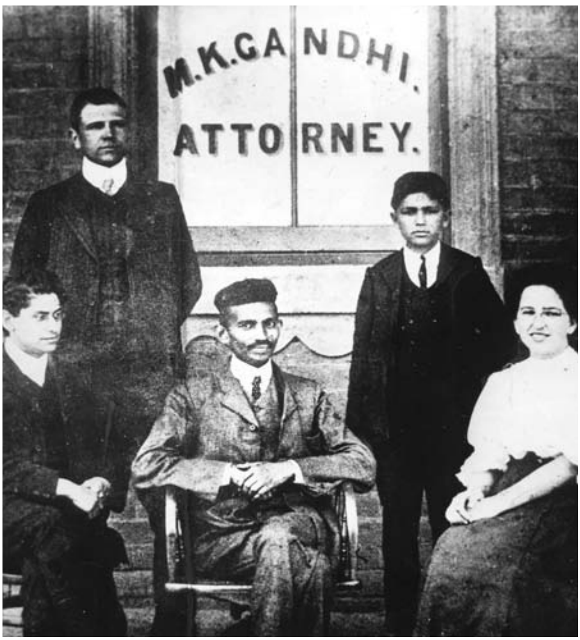
morality. She feared he would drink liquor and eat meat. She was afraid that he would even forget about his wife and find other women.

Gandhi promised his mother that all the time he would be in Britain he would not eat meat, drink liquor, or look at other women. So Laxmidas sold all the family jewels to give his brother enough money to be educated in Britain.

There was still another problem with Gandhi going to Britain. According to his religion, he was forbidden to ride on an **ocean liner**. So, when he decided to go anyway, he was **excommunicated** from the Hindu religion.

Gandhi's family was not even allowed to go down to the dock and say goodbye to him. If they did they would also be thrown out of the Hindu religion. So,

all alone, Gandhi boarded the *S.S. Clyde* bound for London. He was eighteen years old. He had nothing but his ticket, a few pieces of clothing, and enough food for the three week long journey to Britain.



Ghandi in South Africa where he was an attorney.

CHAPTER 4



Gandhi arrived in London and stayed with another Indian student. He used the money he had to buy some clothing so he would look like the English students. He wanted to fit in when he arrived at London University for his classes.

Gandhi remembered his promise to his mother that he would be a strict vegetarian, so he lived on meals of bread and vegetables. He lived a very simple

life. Each night he added up everything he had spent during the day on bus fare, food, postage, and other items.

He kept trying to cut corners and save money because he had so little. He decided he was spending too much money on bus fares, so he moved closer to the university, and each day he walked eight to ten miles to and from classes.

Gandhi cooked his own breakfast of cocoa and oatmeal. His lunch **consisted** of vegetables. For dinner he had cocoa and bread and sometimes boiled spinach. Gandhi was very lonely and homesick during his time in London. The only pleasure he had was **occasionally** eating at a small vegetarian restaurant near where he studied.

In college, Gandhi studied French, Latin, and physics as well as common

and Roman law. He improved his English. He had no trouble passing all his courses. In his free time, he continued his study of religion.

Up until the time he was in London, Gandhi had never read the sacred scripture of his own Hindu religion: the *Bhagavad-Gita.* Now he read it. He learned that to be good, a man must be generous and overcome pride, fear, and **ambition**. Gandhi read the Christian Bible too. He loved the New Testament, especially the life of Jesus. He paid close attention to the Sermon on the Mount. He found its message of love and forgiveness very powerful.

In June 1891 Gandhi finished his final exam. The next day he left London. He did not want to spend a single day longer than necessary in London. He did not enjoy the two years and eight

months he spent there. He had not made a single friend, and he was **anxious** to see his family.

When Gandhi arrived in Bombay (a city now known as Mumbai), he was met by his brother, Laxmidas, with terrible news. Their mother had died some time earlier. The news had been kept from Gandhi. They were afraid that he would be so heart-broken he would quit school. Gandhi was deeply attached to his mother. Now, **grieving** for his mother, Gandhi set out to find work in India.

CHAPTER 5



Gandhi discovered that India was full of lawyers and there was no need for him. He spent many desperate days looking for work. While at home, he tried to teach his wife a skill she had never learned—how to read and write. But she resisted his efforts.

Laxmidas and the rest of the family were disappointed that Gandhi was not finding work. In October 1892 a second son, Manilal, was born to Gandhi and

his wife. Now Gandhi had a wife and two children to support. Gandhi did a few odd jobs working with other lawyers. He made some money. But he knew he could not go on like this without steady income.

Then he got an offer to go to South Africa to help a Muslim lawyer prepare a **lawsuit**. Gandhi hated to leave his family again, but he had no choice. Leaving his wife and sons with Laxmidas, Gandhi set out for Durban, South Africa, in April 1893.

South Africa was a large country ruled by Great Britain. The largest population was black Africans, and they had almost no rights. The British were at the top of the social system. At the bottom were the Africans. In the middle but near the bottom were Asians, mostly Indians. They had come to South Africa to work as laborers.

The white people included the ruling British and the Afrikaners, or Boers. The Boers were Dutch. Both the British and the Boers agreed on the idea that people of color were **inferior**.

Since Gandhi was very dark skinned, he soon ran into trouble in South Africa. Colored people were not allowed to ride with white people on the trains. They had to use a separate compartment. When Gandhi was told this, he refused to ride the train at all.

The Muslim lawyer with whom Gandhi worked was Dada Abdulla. One day, Gandhi went to court with him. The judge asked Gandhi to remove his black **turban**. Gandhi refused and said he was **insulted**. He left the courtroom rather than remove his turban.

When Gandhi tried the train again on a journey from Durban to the Transvaal

border, he had a first class ticket. Still, he was ordered to ride in second class. When he refused, his luggage was thrown off the train and he was shoved onto the platform. Gandhi had to spend the night in the cold station, shivering without his **topcoat** which was in his lost luggage.

Gandhi was deeply offended by the bad treatment of his Indian brothers in South Africa. He made up his mind he would do something about it. He remembered reading in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that a good man was a man of action, working for justice.

Gandhi helped Dada Abdulla win the lawsuit. By then, he was nearing the end of the year he planned to spend in South Africa. But, to help his fellow Indians, he decided to spend some additional time there.

A **bill** called the "Indian Franchise" was in the South African legislature. It was meant to **deprive** Indians of the right to vote. Gandhi believed the right to vote was a basic human right. He organized meetings of Indians to protest the law with **petitions**.

Most Indians had come to South Africa as **indentured servants**. They had promised to work for a period of time in exchange for their ticket to South Africa. Now they were little more than slaves. The government wanted to take from them what little rights they had. The Indians lost the voting battle.

Gandhi believed that the Indians in South Africa were citizens of the British Empire. He thought that they deserved equality under the law. It was clear that Gandhi had a lot of work to do in South Africa. It seemed that he would not be returning home soon.



After three years in South Africa, Gandhi had become a successful lawyer with a good income. He was also a respected leader in the Indian community. He published a **pamphlet** titled, "The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa, an Appeal to the Indian Public." The pamphlet had a green cover. It soon became known as the "Green Book."

In 1896 Gandhi returned to India for a five-month visit with his family. He

decided that when he returned to South Africa, he would bring his wife and sons with him. Kasturba feared the move to South Africa. She could only speak the Gujarati language. She **dreaded** being in a place where everyone around her spoke English or another foreign language. She was not sure she could survive such an unfamiliar place. She was also nervous about dealing with all the Muslim friends her husband had made.

Kasturba was a quiet, shy woman who took great comfort in family and friends she knew for a long time. But in the end, Gandhi convinced his wife to move to South Africa. In all the disagreements between Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi, he always won.

When Kasturba Gandhi arrived in South Africa, she had to give up her

comfortable traditional clothing—the loose fitting **dhoti** and sandals. Now she would have to wear more modern clothing and hard leather shoes.

The Gandhi family moved to South Africa in 1897. Their third son, Ramdas, was born there. During Gandhi's absence from South Africa, the "Green Book" had become famous.

Although the Indian people loved the pamphlet, the Europeans hated it. Gandhi was attacked by mobs of Europeans on the street. He was struck by rocks, mud, and garbage. He was cut in the neck before he was rescued from the mob.

There was a lot of tension in South Africa between the British and the Dutch. In 1899 full scale war broke out. It was called the Boer War. Since Gandhi was a British citizen, he felt he

had to side with the British. Gandhi did not believe in war. But he volunteered to form an ambulance **corps** to help the British wounded.

Gandhi and other volunteers carried wounded soldiers off the battlefield. The ambulance corps that Gandhi led consisted of African and Indian born Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Gandhi hoped the good work done by the volunteers would impress the British. He hoped the British would grant more civil rights to Indians. Gandhi and thirty-eight members of the corps were awarded the South African War Medal for courage.

The Boer War ended with the British victory. The Union of South Africa was then established. South Africa withdrew from the British Commonwealth. It was ruled by Dutch politicians.

Kasturba Gandhi had her fourth and last child, Devdas, in 1900. Her husband served as a **midwife**. The Gandhis lived in a villa on the beach. Mohandas Gandhi ruled the family. He did not want a European education for his sons. Instead, he taught them himself. Gandhi was a stern father. His sons respected rather than loved him. Gandhi himself had a stern father. He was carrying on the tradition.

Gandhi forced his family to live a very simple life without luxuries. They washed their own clothing. Gandhi cut his own hair. His friends sometimes said that his hair looked like a rat had chewed on it. Gandhi also made his wife get rid of her jewels, which were very special to her.

The worst **sacrifice** for Kasturba Gandhi was having to empty the

chamber pots herself. In India, the untouchables did this work for her and all higher caste Indians. Now that this job fell to Kasturba, she felt humiliated. She obeyed her husband but shed bitter tears.

In 1901 son Manilal became very ill with **typhoid fever**, which turned into **pneumonia**. The doctor prescribed chicken broth and eggs for the child. But Gandhi's firm belief in vegetarianism forbade this. Gandhi treated Manilal himself. He gave his son many hot baths and had him drink orange juice and diluted milk. Gandhi remained at the boy's side for forty days. Manilal finally recovered. Gandhi called it a blessing from God for his own faithfulness to his principles.



Gandhi bought eighty acres of fertile soil in South Africa. He **founded** a community called Phoenix. It became the headquarters for Indian politics. Forty to fifty followers of Gandhi lived at Phoenix. There, they promoted the simple way of life.

In 1905 there was a new law before the South African legislature called the Asiatic Law Agreement. The law was to prevent further Asian immigration to South Africa. The whites did not want any more colored people.

Under the new law, all Indians over the age of eight had to carry a registration card. Police could ask to see the card at any time. This was seen as a way to find and **deport** illegal immigrants. Gandhi bitterly opposed this law and vowed a campaign of resistance called "Truth Force."

Hundreds and then thousands of Indians carried picket signs and marched in front of government offices. They protested what they called the "Black Law." Gandhi publicly announced that he would not register.

In January 1908 he was arrested for failing to register. He was taken before a judge. Gandhi was **convicted** and **sentenced** to two months in jail. This would be the first of many jail sentences Gandhi served while fighting for justice.

Gandhi eventually worked out a

compromise with the government to make registration voluntary. He was on his way to register voluntarily when he was attacked by a Hindu. The Hindu man believed that Gandhi had given in on the issue. Gandhi was struck in the head with a stone, but he was not seriously hurt.

Harilal, Gandhi's eldest son, was unhappy with his father's strictness. Home schooled, Harilal longed for a formal education. When Harilal married a local girl his father opposed the marriage.

Then, Gandhi pushed his son into the battle for civil rights in South Africa. Harilal Gandhi was arrested. His wife and young son were left alone while he was in prison. Harilal blamed his father for the misfortune.

Gandhi could clearly see how the Indians in South Africa were abused. But, he could not see how the black majority was even more cruelly treated. He briefly assisted the **Zulus** during one of their uprisings. He carried the Zulu wounded off the battlefield. But otherwise, he did not get involved in the **victimization** of blacks.

In October 1908 Gandhi was again arrested for failing to carry his registration card. He was sentenced to two months at hard labor. Later, he got three months at hard labor.

He spent nine hours a day polishing the asphalt floor and iron door of his cell. By the time he was released in May 1909, his fame had spread beyond South Africa and India to the world. His battle for Indian rights for South Africa had captured the attention of the world press.

Gandhi traveled to London to explain his struggle. He published a pamphlet called "Home Rule." It asked Great Britain to grant independence to India. He also asked the Indian people to return to their traditional ways. Harilal was now in full rebellion against his father. He left South Africa for India. Now twenty-three, he desperately wanted the high school education he had been denied. He enrolled in an Indian high school.

The **breach** between Harilal and his father was now so deep it would never be healed.



In March 1913 the South African government made all non-Christian marriages **null and void**. Gandhi and other civil rights leaders reversed this quickly.

In June 1914 Gandhi made an agreement with the government which was a freedom charter for Indians. The Black Act was **abolished**, and all civil rights for Indians were returned to them. Gandhi called this a victory for his methods of peaceful resistance. In

July 1914 Gandhi and his family returned to India.

At this time, World War I was breaking out. Germany, Austria, Hungary, and their allies were fighting against Great Britain, France, Russia, and their allies. At the time, Great Britain still ruled India along with some Indian princes.

Gandhi continued to oppose all war. Once again, he formed another ambulance corps to assist the wounded. Gandhi also asked Britain for home rule for India. He demanded an end to the untouchable class and equality for women.

There was one specific way in which women suffered greatly. That was the tradition that if a man died his wife was expected to jump onto the funeral **pyre** to die as well.

Gandhi built a community of followers at Sabarmati. He invited the untouchables to join. There were ten million untouchables in India. They were forbidden to use public roads or public wells. They had to live apart from other people.

Since the untouchables had little work, many had to scavenge for food like animals. When Gandhi admitted the first untouchable family to Sabarmati, his wife was very upset.

Great Britain's Government of India Act of 1919 set up preliminary steps for eventual home rule for India. But the Rowlett Act of the same year established severe penalties for **sedition**. Anything that disrupted daily life in the country could be called sedition.

Gandhi opposed the Rowlett Act. He called a *hartal,* or an Indian day of

mourning. All businesses were closed and there were massive protest demonstrations. Gandhi also fasted. The hartal spread throughout the country. It gave the Indian people a sense of new power. The hartal brought life to a standstill in India.

In the City of Amritsar, the hartal turned violent. Two Englishmen were killed by an Indian mob. British General E. H. Dyer was sent in to restore order. He banned all further demonstrations in the city.

When ten to twenty thousand Indians gathered for a peaceful demonstration, Dyer ordered his troops to fire into the crowd. Gunfire rained on terrified people running for their lives. On that day, at least 379 died and hundreds were injured. Gandhi joined the rest of India in outrage against the **atrocity**.



CHAPTER 9

In 1920, Gandhi joined the Indian Home Rule League. He became its first president. He now worked tirelessly for India's independence.

Everything in Gandhi helped make him a powerful leader in India. He had courage, vitality, and good humor. Although he was fiercely devoted to his cause, a smile would appear often on his toothless mouth. He was selfless, working always for the people.

The frail little man in the white *dhoti,* his wraparound garment, became a beloved symbol of peace and simplicity. Gandhi became the greatest hope the people had. He was Mahatma (Great Lord) Gandhi.

Gandhi toured India in steaming hot weather. He talked to crowds of one hundred thousand people or more during a seven month period. He ate three meals a day. The meals consisted of sixteen ounces of goat's milk, three slices of toast, two oranges, and a handful of grapes or raisins.

He **preached** the simple, traditional way of life. He spun cotton himself several hours each day. In the community of Sabarmati, cotton was planted. Only homespun clothing was worn. Gandhi prayed daily, chanting, "Rama, Rama, Rama" ("God, God, God").

Gandhi wrote articles critical of British rule. He accused the British of shaking their "gory claws" into the face of India.

The British in India used Muslim volunteers in their army. Unlike the Hindus, the Muslims had no problem with military service.

Gandhi knew if he was to be successful in freeing India, he had to win the support of Muslims too. He wanted the Hindus and Muslims to work together as brothers. Gandhi designed a flag for independent India. It has three colors, red for Hindus, green for Muslims, and white for purity.

On February 5, 1921, a large demonstration for Indian independence at Chauri Chaura turned violent. The police clashed with the marchers and

opened fire. When the police ran out of ammunition, the enraged crowd attacked them. They murdered some of the policemen. This horrified Gandhi.

On March 22, 1922, Gandhi was arrested for sedition. He was convicted and sentenced to six years in prison. Many Indians wept as the smiling Gandhi was led off to prison. He believed that every time he went to prison, he was bringing the day of Indian independence closer.

Gandhi was content in prison. He arose at four in the morning to pray and meditate for six hours. He read books and wrote letters. He spent hours spinning thread. But he did not serve the whole sentence. When he became sick with **appendicitis**, he was freed.

Much to Gandhi's sorrow, increasing violence between Hindus and Muslims

broke out. Gandhi began a twenty-one day fast for an end to the violence. On the twenty-first day, Hindus and Muslims came together to pray. Gandhi ended his fast.

In 1925 Gandhi again toured India to spread his ideas. Some Indians believed he was the **reincarnation** of God. There were claims that he cured the sick. But Gandhi rejected all this. He said he was only a man and his power was just the power of **persuasion**.

Gandhi opposed child marriages, urging no woman under the age of twenty-one to be married. He was especially upset at the many child widows in India. Young girls were often married to older men and when the men died, the girls could not marry again.

At this time in India, there were more than eleven thousand widows under the age of five. Eighty-five thousand widows were between five and ten. Altogether, almost four hundred thousand Indian girls under the age of fifteen were widows. Gandhi demanded that these girls be allowed to remarry.

In his struggle to improve the status of the untouchables, Gandhi gave them a new name: *Harijans,* which means children of God.

Gandhi believed India would become independent when it was spiritually ready. He encouraged **virtuous** living among the Indian people. He led discussions with Great Britain. Talks between Gandhi and other Indian leaders and the British fell apart in 1931. Again, Gandhi was arrested for his political activities.

Gandhi fasted in prison. As he lay in the shade of a mango tree in the prison yard, he grew very weak. The British, afraid he would die in their hands, freed him.

As Gandhi struggled for his goals, the personal tragedy of his relationship with his son, Harilal grew worse. Harilal was often drunk. He wrote mean letters to his father accusing him of being abusive. In 1936 Harilal became a Muslim. Gandhi was deeply saddened.

In the 1930s the world was again moving toward a terrible war. Germany, under Adolf Hitler, was grabbing territory in Europe. Italy, under Benito Mussolini, attacked Ethiopia in Africa. Japan had invaded China.

These three countries, Germany, Italy, and Japan formed a dangerous alliance

called the Axis. The Axis threatened the peace of the world. Gandhi clung to his peaceful principles. Even in the face of such massive evil as Adolf Hitler, Gandhi believed that a peaceful approach would work.

Gandhi said that if a country was attacked by the Axis powers, it should not fight back. Rather, people should not cooperate with the invaders. He believed with total peaceful resistance, the invaders would be stopped. Many people thought Gandhi was living in a dream world.

Gandhi insisted that even if an aggressor like Hitler took over a country, he could occupy the land, but he could not conquer the minds, hearts, and souls of the people. In this way, Hitler would fail in the end. Gandhi's **pacifist** attitude in the face of Axis aggression around the world made the

British angry. They wanted active participation of India in the fight against the Axis, and Gandhi was preaching peace. The British once again arrested Gandhi in 1942, along with his wife, Kasturba.



Kasturba Ghandi

CHAPTER 10



Kasturba Gandhi had a weak heart. While she was in prison, she experienced shortness of breath. She could no longer sleep lying down. Instead she sat up at night with her head resting on a table. She felt that she would soon die. She asked that her sons come. She wanted to see them for the last time.

Manilal Gandhi was in South Africa, and he could not come. The other three

sons arrived at their mother's bedside. Harilal was drunk when he came. He was not allowed to see his mother until he was sober. When he was able to see her, Kasturba was overcome with joy.

In December 1943 Kasturba got pneumonia. Her sons asked that she be given **penicillin**. But Gandhi insisted on treating her by natural means, with honey and water. On February 22, 1944, Kasturba died with her head resting in her husband's lap. They had been married for sixty-two years. Gandhi felt that his wife had become a part of himself. Now, part of him had died.

At her funeral, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians prayed, sang hymns, and wept together. Kasturba's body was cremated in a funeral pyre according to Hindu tradition. Her ashes were buried on the prison grounds.

Soon after Kasturba's death, Gandhi became ill with malaria. The British freed him. They were always afraid to have him die while he was in their custody. Gandhi walked from the prison on May 6, 1944. This was his last prison stay. He had spent two thousand and eighty-nine days in Indian prisons and two hundred and forty-nine days in South African prisons.

Gandhi now focused all his attention on uniting Hindus and Muslims and gaining independence for India. But, he faced terrible odds. The Muslims in India wanted the country to be divided. They wanted one part to be given to them and the other part to the Hindus. Gandhi wanted one united country with all religions treating one another as brothers.

In 1946 violence between the Hindus and Muslims became so terrible that thousands died. Men, women, and children died on both sides. Gandhi was horrified and heartbroken. He traveled on foot across India pleading for peace. He begged the Hindus and the Muslims to give up their hatred and live together. But, the violence continued.

Finally on August 15, 1947, India was divided into two countries, Pakistan for the Muslims and India for the Hindus. This caused there to be millions of Hindu and Muslim **refugees**. The Muslim refugees fled into Pakistan. Hindus in Pakistan fled into India. India and Pakistan were now independent.

The violence continued even after the countries separated. On January 13, 1948, Gandhi began his final fast for an

end to violence. Gandhi was living in Birla House. During the fast, he lay in a crouched position with his knees pulled up toward his stomach. He was losing two pounds a day. His eyes were closed as if in sleep.

When he spoke to those who came to support him, his voice was weak. He asked all Indians to purify themselves and put an end once and for all to violence. On the morning of January 18, a pledge was drafted by Hindus, Muslims, and others, promising tolerance for one another. Overcome with joy, Gandhi ended his fast.

Not all Hindus were pleased with Gandhi's philosophy. Some blamed him for the fact that now India had been separated.

Some traditional Hindus clung to the belief that the untouchables had to be

maintained in a lower position. They resented Gandhi's efforts to free the untouchables from their burdens. From among these angry people came thirty-five-year-old Nathuram Godse, a newspaper editor. He began to plot against Gandhi.

On January 25, 1948, Gandhi arrived at a prayer meeting in good spirits. He had been told that tolerance was growing among Hindus and Muslims. It was a cold day. Gandhi asked that the people who came to pray be given straw mats to sit on since the ground was damp.

Nathuram Godse was in the front row of the people who had come to see Gandhi. He had a pistol in his pocket. Most of the people bowed respectfully when Gandhi appeared. Godse did the same. Gandhi touched his palms

together. He smiled and blessed the people who had gathered.

Suddenly Godse pushed forward. He fired three shots at Gandhi from his small automatic pistol. The first bullet struck Gandhi's stomach and came out his back. Gandhi remained standing. The second bullet tore through the center of his body, also going out the back. His white garment ran red with blood. Gandhi's face turned white. The third shot entered his lung.

"Hey Rama!" (Oh God!) Gandhi cried. His glasses fell off. The sandals dropped from his feet as he slipped to the ground. As Gandhi was carried to Birla House, Godse was seized by the crowd.

Gandhi still had a pulse when he was laid down. But, when the doctors

arrived, there was nothing they could do. Gandhi's face was peaceful in death as Hindu prayers were chanted around his body.

Gandhi's body was washed and thousands prayed and wept as he was carried to Jumna where he was laid on a funeral pyre. A million people shouted "long live Mahatma Gandhi" as the fire consumed his body.

As the pyre burned, a frail man, his body racked with **tuberculosis**, stood at the edge of the crowd. It was Gandhi's son, Harilal. He came to pay his respects. Gandhi's ashes were cast into the holy Ganges River.

From all over the world came words of praise for the peaceful little man who brought independence to India. Gandhi was the man who taught the world that revolutions could be won by

peaceful resistance. Gandhi fought his battles without hatred. He preached kindness and tolerance to all.

Martin Luther King Jr. was the Baptist preacher who led the civil rights movement in America in the 1950s and 1960s. He embraced Gandhi's principles of nonviolence, even in the face of brutal attacks. Just as Gandhi refused to **stoop** to hatred as he struggled to free India, King clung to nonviolence in his successful crusade to end discrimination in the United States.

General Douglas MacArthur, famous military leader of World War II, commented on Mahatma Gandhi's death. He said that if civilization itself is to survive, all mankind must eventually accept Gandhi's philosophy.

Mahatma Gandhi, by his life and death, witnessed to peace.

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GLOSSARY

abolish: to do away with

ambition: a desire of some kind of achievement

anxious: worried, nervous

appendicitis: inflammation of the appendix

atrocity: a terrible or appalling act or situation

bill: a draft of a proposed law

breach: a break of friendly relations

caste: an economic and social division in Hindu society

ceremony: a formal activity on an important occasion

chamber pot: a container used for human waste

charming: nice; pleasant; polite

compromise: an agreement between two parties

consist: to be made up of

convict: to find guilty of an act

corps: a group of people who work together for a specific purpose

cremate: to burn a body after death

datura: a plant that can be poisonous

defiance: disobedience, rebelliousness

deport: to force to leave a country or area

deprive: to deny or take away

dhoti: a piece of clothing worn by Indian men

dreaded: to be anticipated with fear

embrace: to welcome or to hold close

excommunicate: to cut off someone from communication with a faith or group

fast: to not eat in protest

found: to set up a community

grieve: to feel sad about something or to mourn

indentured servants: someone who is under a contract to work for a specific amount of time

inferior: not as good or important

insult: to offend someone

lawsuit: a criminal or civil action brought before a court

midwife: someone who helps a woman give birth

morality: the idea of what is right and wrong; ethics

null and void: no longer valid

occasionally: every now and then

ocean liner: a ship that travels across oceans

pacifist: a peaceful person

pamphlet: a booklet with information about a specific topic

penicillin: a medicine used to fight a bacterial infection

persuasion: the process of convincing people to do something

petition: a formal request

pneumonia: a sickness that involves an inflammation of the lungs

preach: to give a speech trying to convince people of ones ideas

pyre: usually a pile of wood used for burning a dead body

refugee: a person who escapes a place to find safety

reincarnation: a new embodiment of a person

resistance: the act of opposing something

sacrifice: to give up something valuable

scholar: a well educated person

sedition: something that is illegal

sentence: the punishment that is assigned to someone after a trial

shock: a terrible scare

stern: very serious

stoop: to lower oneself

topcoat: a lightweight coat

tuberculosis: a disease that often affects the lungs

turban: a piece of cloth that is worn on the head

twinkling: blinking

typhoid fever: a sickness that often causes death

victimization: to make a victim of

virtuous: having many good qualities

Zulus: a group of African people

INDEX

20th CENTURY BIOGRAPHIES

TITLES

Mahatma Gandhi was a small man, but he helped bring about large-scale change in the world. Through peaceful acts of disobedience, Gandhi helped free India from British rule. See how Gandhi made extraordinary personal sacrifices and be inspired by his passion and peaceful ways.

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